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# School Programs Commodity Update

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## What's New in the Food Distribution Program for Schools

### **BPR Teams Present Recommendations**

USDA's initiative to reinvent its commodity programs, known as *Food Distribution 2000*, continues to move forward. Using a technique known as "Business Process Reengineering," two teams have forwarded recommendations to USDA on how the commodity programs can be made more streamlined, cost effective, and customer service oriented.

The Commodity Ordering Reinvention (CORE) Team developed recommendations on how to significantly improve service to our school customers while maintaining support to agricultural producers. The Commodity Hold and Recall Team (CHART) has identified ways to better handle commodity recalls and holds so we can quickly and safely remove products from schools. The Trailblazers for New-Triton (TNT) Team are developing recommendations on improving the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations.

All three teams met on August 5 with the USDA Commodity Improvement Council (CIC), which is comprised of four Under Secretaries who oversee USDA's commodity distribution programs. During the meeting, the teams presented their recommendations.

Over the next couple of months, groups from USDA will analyze the Team's recommendations and develop a Departmental proposal for reinventing the commodity programs. Once this Departmental proposal is developed, we will post it on the Food Distribution's web site for comment, and also solicit input on it through a series of regional listening sessions to be held around the country. We welcome your comments, especially after the Departmental proposal is developed. After all comments have been considered, the CIC will approve the final reinvention plan. So, please let us know your views by e-mail (Fdd-pst@fns.usda.gov), fax (703-305-2420), telephone (703-305-2888), or by letter.

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A web site is available to keep you updated on our initiative. Check in for the latest information at *Error! Bookmark not defined.f*[d2000/fd2000.htm](#) //

### Commodity Forecast Looks Good

USDA expects to have an adequate supply of fruits and vegetables this school year despite the drought in some parts of the country.

Although we started out slow buying beef patties, the product is being purchased on time and according to the requested shipping periods. We expect to be able to purchase other beef, pork and poultry products in the quantities that are desired by schools. //

### USDA Makes Changes in Cheese Procurements

**T**his school year, USDA has changed its monthly cheese contracting to long term. Long term contracting will improve customer service with on-time deliveries. It will also help to ensure consistent product availability and high cheese quality. This will allow USDA to meet the needs of schools for the entire year.

This school year all cheese will be available in commercial packaging. By allowing both long term contracting and commercial packaging, schools have more assurance that cheese will be available when they need it.

### Frozen Peach Cups Changes

Last school year some schools encountered a problem with frozen peach cups turning brown immediately upon thawing. Because of this problem, we worked with the vendor to resolve it. The vendor has now changed its formulation, and is optimistic that this will correct the problem.

To help ensure that the frozen peach cups do not turn brown, the vendor indicated that the product should not be thawed out of the freezer 3 or 4 days before serving. The product can be stored in the refrigerator overnight before serving. Also, the product can be set out to thaw at room temperature on the morning of the day schools wish to serve the cups for lunch (approximately 2-4 hours ahead of serving).

For the convenience of the consumer, the vendor is placing thawing and handling instructions on the top flap of each case of frozen peach cups. //

*Did you know.....*

***October 10-16, 1999 is National School Lunch Week***

### Bonus Cooked Beef Pot Roast Is A Hit with Schools

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**W**e received 714 acceptability surveys from schools which received the bonus cooked beef pot roast last year. The responses and comments, which came from schools in Colorado, Louisiana, Maine, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Wisconsin were very informative. We want to thank the schools in those states for taking the time to complete the survey.

An overwhelming majority of respondents rated the product as “good” or “excellent”, and the students liked the product. Of those few respondents registering a complaint, fat content and gristle were of concern. Most respondents said they were very satisfied with the product and would like to see it offered again in the future.

Schools served the product primarily as a main dish and in sandwiches, stews and salads. //

### Early Start on SY 2000 Deliveries

USDA is allowing States to order commodities in quantities that are different from the States' fair share or capped dollar amounts. Several States contacted the regional offices and asked if this was possible. USDA has been able to accommodate requests of several States this year for additional fruit and vegetables, early beef deliveries, and additional capped product, such as cut-up and breaded chicken. Let your States

know if you want more than your fair share.

USDA has gotten off to a good start with purchasing commodities for delivery in SY 2000. Most states have already placed orders for 85 to 90 percent of their SY 2000 school entitlement. Schools should have many commodities to begin this school year. //

### "What's New with School Commodities" Newsletter

The Fall 1999 issue of "What's New with School Commodities" newsletter will be mailed to all school food authorities this month. In this issue, we have highlighted several "success stories" from around the country. For example, *DOD's Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Project* which grew from a pilot to a nationwide project is discussed. Several articles on some schools' efforts to initiate or increase food recovery in the National School Lunch Program are also included.

In addition, there are articles about maximizing your commodities and entitlement dollars, food service tips for success, food safety, and USDA's improved customer service to schools. We believe schools will find these articles interesting and helpful to them in their work of feeding the Nation's children.

This newsletter is printed in an easily reproducible size. So, please encourage your school district to share it with their

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schools. It will also be available later this month on our Web site at

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/> //

### Recipe Exchange



We are excited to announce that FDD's new Recipe Exchange web page is now on the Internet! The Recipe Exchange is an interactive tool for schools to learn new and different ways to serve commodities and other foods. It also offers an excellent opportunity for schools to share their own successes. Every recipe on the page will include at least one commodity and will be linked to the FDD commodity fact sheets database. Other appropriate sites will be linked, as well, including food boards and associations.

New recipes will be added periodically, every month or so. We are particularly interested in sharing recipes that are targeted for new or hard-to-use commodities, and others that introduce regional tastes to schools across the country. For easy access and cross-referencing, recipes are organized by menu category (desserts, entrees, breads, casseroles, soups and salads, and vegetables) as well as by Food Group, like the fact sheets.

We invite schools to send recipes, menu ideas, and serving suggestions they have found to be popular with their students to our e-mail address:

[fdd-pst@fns.usda.gov](mailto:fdd-pst@fns.usda.gov) We will add as many of those as possible to our Recipe Exchange web page. The recipes posted

on the page will not be tested for yield or standardized by USDA. //

### Comments

If you have any questions or comments on our products or service, we have an e-mail address specifically for this purpose: [fdd-pst@fns.usda.gov](mailto:fdd-pst@fns.usda.gov) or you can write to Food Distribution Division, Food and Nutrition Service, USDA, 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 520, Alexandria, VA 22302.

### Acronym List

BPR	Business Process Reengineering
CHART	Commodity Hold and Recall Team
CIC	Commodity Improvement Council
CORE	Commodity Ordering and Reengineering
FDD	Food Distribution Division
SY	School Year
TNT	Trailblazers for New-Triton Team
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

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***Program Support Team, in conjunction with Schools and Institution Branch, USDA, FNS, FDD 9/26/99 7:07:36 pm***